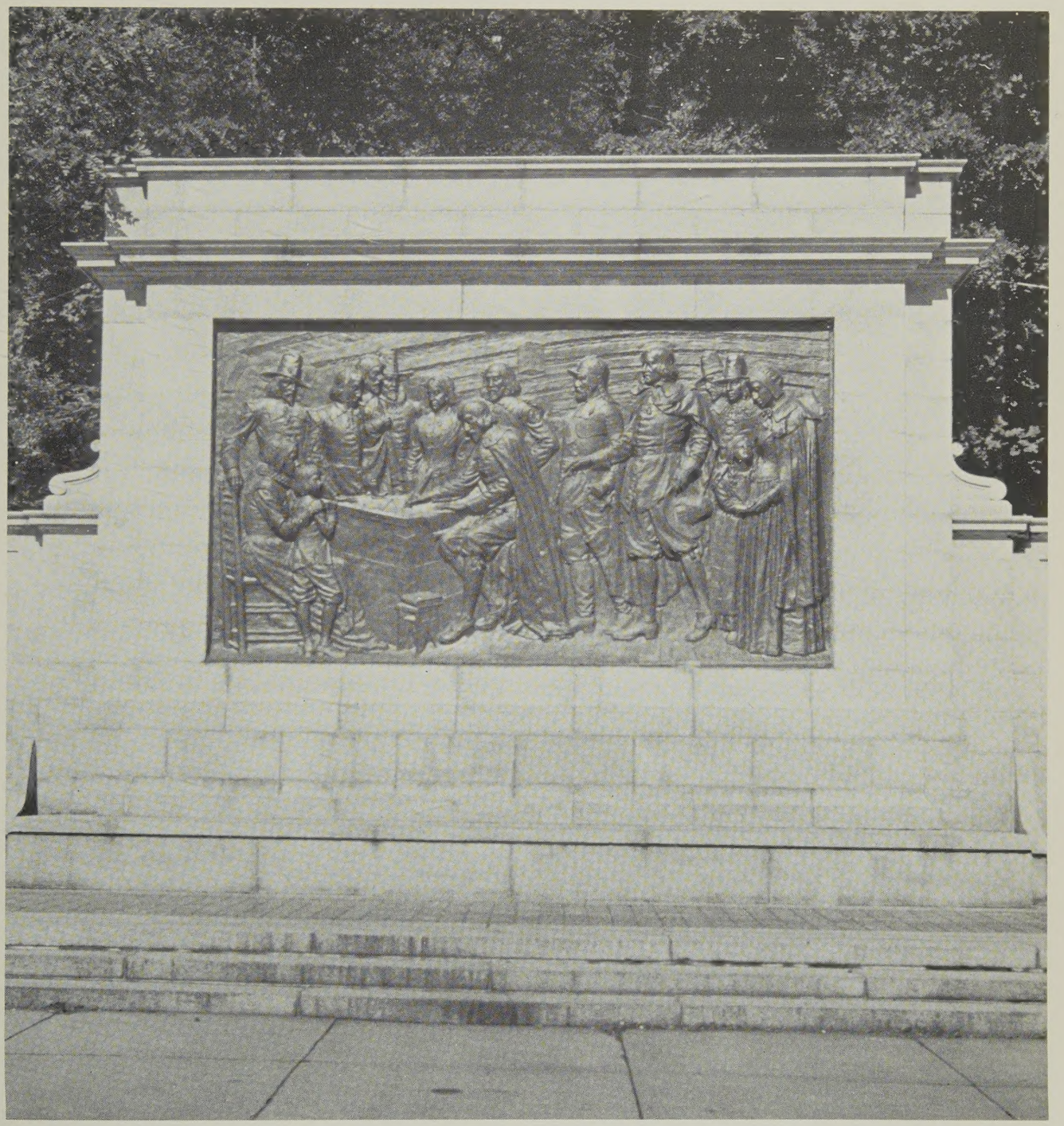
The Congregationalist



"SIGNING THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT"

VOLUME I NOVEMBER, 1958 NUMBER 9

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." — Galatians 5:1

WHY THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES SHOULD LIVE

The Rev. Russell J. Clinchy, D.D.

Forest Hills, New York

The interesting report in the CHRISTIAN CENTURY for August 13th, describing the meeting of the International Congregational Council at Hartford, contains statements by several speakers which need comment from those who are dedicated to the continuation of the Congregational order of church life.

I write as one who transferred from the Presbyterian to the Congregational ministry in 1923, but not because I denied the validity of the Christian witness of Presbyterianism. No one could do that. I did so because I sought a greater measure of freedom for my mind and spirit which I believed could better be found in the Congregational Way of freedom from ecclesiastical authority. The experience of these years brought such opportunity and content, as I know it has for hundreds of others who made the spiritual pilgrimage, that I believe I must continue in it and help to keep its witness alive in the world in fellowship with those who will also continue to feel the same way.

The report stated that the addresses presented at that meeting contained these statements: that autonomous churches, associated freely for fellowship but uncontrolled by any ecclesiastical direction, are inadequate to meet the need of the world or to make ethical decisions; that Congregationalists face directly the possibility that they should die so that the greater Church may live; that freedom to obey Christ may, in certain times and places, mean presbyterial or episcopal forms of church government; that the leaders of the Congregational Churches are now engaged in a struggle to bring into being a United Church of Christ despite the rear-guard attacks of a small group of purists and literalists.

These statements, and others like them, looking toward the gradual creation of a United Protestant Church are made by men of the highest personal integrity and Christian conscience. I honor the devotion with which they hold their views. However, I happen to be one, among many others, who disagrees with the thesis upon which these statements are founded, and especially to the plans they propose for the disappearance of the Congregational witness of the fellowship of individual members and individual churches, and the replacement of this witness by the creation of an ecclesiastical organization of a United Church.

Other Churches Do Not Plan To Die

I disagree, first of all, because I see no need for the advocacy of the death of the Congregational order of church life, or of a transfer of it into one of the other church orders, when there is not the slightest suggestion that either of those should also perish, and when there is no indication that either of them intends to do so.

On the first Sunday of July, I attended the great and spectacular service of worship of the Lambeth Conference in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. This was the gathering of 313 bishops from all the churches of the Episcopal (Anglican) communion across the world under the invitation of the mother church, the Church of England. It was a tremendous and moving expression of devotion, majesty and power. While there I did not hear the bells of the Cathedral tolling for the death of the episcopal order of church life. I hope no one ever will.

Last May, two of the branches of the Presbyterian Churches of America joined their corporate bodies into a new United Presbyterian Church, with the confidence that the third branch would soon enter that union to complete Presbyterian unity and power. The report of that event was not phrased as an announcement to be published among the death notices.

During the same month, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to my mind the greatest member of the Presbyterian family, refused to ratify a report suggesting union with the Church of England which would include the acceptance of the place and rule of bishops in the Presbyterian order. I know many of the Scottish ministry and lay people personally and I am sure that they do not desire the dissolution of that Church which has infused into the life of Scotland so much of its integrity and character. Who is there who would desire the end of Presbyterian history and witness?

In the light of this reality, why should the leaders of the third valid order, the Congregational, implore its members to desire and work for the death of its vital and creative witness, or to submerge it into the continued pattern of one of the other two. Any individual member or church may transfer from one to another of the orders freely. But why should they demand that the other members of their order be forced to follow them through compulsion?

The Distinctive Witness of Congregationalism

But the great reason why the concept of the Congregational Way should not die or be absorbed into the organization of an entirely different system rests in the positive declaration of its merit and its creative spirit.

Its genius lies not in a claim to be an ecclesiastical legislature and judicatory which can encompass all minority expressions of the spirit of God, with power to maintain and develop this organization until it rolls onward to the day when it has become all-embracing enough to make all Christians submit to its direction and authority under The One Great Church of Christ. There is one branch of Christianity which makes such a claim, and it is enough.

The Congregational Way is the opposite of that. It takes Christ's words that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is to be found in the midst of them, to be a valid definition of a Church of Christ. Here will be found what may be best defined by the concept of the presence of "The Inner Light" which is a mystical appreciation — the light which proceeds from the presence of Christ, a Christ Who surmounts all names and creeds and organizations. Each group, therefore, is a church, and, in the sense that truth is that which is ultimate, is a "true church."

But to be a "true" church in that sense, no one church can possess power which would allow it to extend its authority, or the authority of a group of churches, over another. It is amenable to no ecclesiastical judicatory.

To such disciples Christ gave one rule — "And this is my commandment, that ye love one another," not alone in the inadequate definition of that word as it is used in our modern language, but in the depth of all that Christ

poured into the concept. Because they are brought together in that bond of love, the members have been implored by the Apostle to be "kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us."

These words are the charter for service to each other and to all the needs of mankind, but the motivation and the action of such service must always flow from the freedom of the spirit under the concept of the admonition, "freely ye have received, freely give".

Diversity of mind and spirit and interpretation is the cardinal principle of freedom, and so in this fellowship of the Congregational Way there will be found those who would define themselves as fundamentalists, orthodox, unitarian, universalist, evangelical and liberal. This is inevitable for there is no organization in the fellowship which may claim power to refuse ordination or installation to any minister, or membership in a church to any seeker, because one may classify himself in any one of these categories. That was decided once and for all in Congregationalism in 1854 by the failure of the attempt of the ministry of Connecticut to excommunicate Horace Bushnell for what they called his "heresy". Those who now seek truth in their time, as Horace Bushnell did in his, now may find in the Congregational Fellowship a spiritual home.

There are no universal creeds, forms of worship, or manuals of discipline, for diversities of spirit are not only expected but welcomed as the necessary ingredient of the manifestation of the creative spirit of God within the life of man.

Participation in worship and service is extended joyfully to members of all other Christian, and non-Christian expressions of faith in God, even as our participation in theirs is anticipated as a similar blessing. Beyond and above our characteristic forms and expressions and interpretations, the sacramental altars present to all freely the inexpressible meanings of man's longing for "the means of grace and the hope of glory". Surely this is the picture we see as we think of the meaning of The Church Universal.

The same principle holds true regarding social relations, and was recognized as a fundamental Congregational principle by the Board of Review in 1954. It is that among Congregationalists will be found liberals and conservatives—and many variations of these—in the areas of social and political thinking. Each individual will choose his or her area of thought and action, and may become members of commissions or councils or fellowships to study the problems in these areas. But no one of these groups, no matter whether they be of the left, the center, or the right position, may presume to equate its particular premises or conclusions with Congregationalism, or to speak in its name. Only upon this basis can there be freedom of personal conviction and absence of conformity.

Diversity is a psychological fact as well as a religious one. There can no more be "One Church" than there can be "One School" of Art, or Literature, or Philosophy, or Science. The very idea that artists or writers or philosophers or scientists could possibly be gathered into one school of thought and expression is so preposterous that it can only be met with a smile. And surely that is most true of religion. In Congregationalism this is accepted as a psychological and a religious understanding.

This is not the basis for a waterized, lowest-common-denominator expression of the Christian faith and practice. Bushnell preached the truth as God gave him to see the truth, and by so doing opened windows upon vast new horizons which so many of us now see and live by. But he expected others to have the same fervor to seek the truth, and to give the same devotion to whatever they might find. His travail made it possible for each Congregationalist to form his own statement of faith and to practice his religion in freedom; conscious that if "all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and malice be put away from us" we shall be able to live together as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

All this is the reason why many of us—and the number is constantly growing—are resolved that this vital expression of Christian experience shall continue to live as part of the whole Christian experience.

The freedom for each Congregational church and member to make a decision either to enter the United Church of Christ or to continue in the present fellowship still remains a valid prerogative unimpaired by any action yet taken by the General Council.

Those of us whose churches are now members of the National Association welcome a decision of churches to join with us. We understand completely that each Congregational church now has the right and the privilege of deciding to become a member of any other denomination, including the United Church of Christ, but we also know that the same right extends to those who wish to remain Congregational. To them the doors of the continuing Congregational fellowship are open. The spirit of the Pilgrims, the Puritans, and the Independents is still alive. It will continue to live in the world.

AUTUMN LEAF RALLY

As the glory of autumn leaves on Connecticut hillsides approached its climax, it made especially appropriate the name "Autumn Leaf Rally" for a gathering of over one hundred Congregational young people held at South Congregational Church, Hartford, over the October 12 weekend. On Saturday morning, following a chapel service, discussion groups were held on "How to Have a Good Year in a Local Pilgrim Fellowship," led by Rev. Myron R. Bunnell; "What's What in Christian Life Service," led by Rev. Joseph J. Russell; "In the News—the Story of our Chinese Refugee Project" led by Rev. John R. Elmore; and "How to Get the Most Out of Your Area Pilgrim Fellowship," led by Dr. Henry David Gray. Snack time, business meeting, and an address by Rev. Myron R. Bunnell, together with luncheon, were followed by a "Color Cavalcade" of buses and private cars, taking the group to Highland Lake in the Litchfield Hills for a picnic. The day's program came to a close with a service in an old meeting house, conducted by Dr. Walter G. Couch, Jr. of Northampton, Massachusetts, Dean of the Conference.

Sunday morning was devoted to the 300th observance of the Savoy Declaration, with Dr. Gray preaching on "The Sparkle of Freedom," and an assembly with discussion on "My Bible and I" led by Rev. John R. Elmore. Following dinner at host homes, the young people again assembled at South Church for reports on the Saturday morning discussion groups, fellowship hour, interest group meetings on "Boy—Girl Relations," "Community Concerns," and "Other Faiths". The day concluded with a chapel service conducted by South Church young people. Those who were able to remain until Monday gathered for a closing service before leaving by automobile, bus, and train for home.

The credit for the success of this rally is due to Dr. Walter G. Couch, Jr., Dean, Dr. Henry David Gray, Area Adviser, to the various leaders of groups and other speakers, to the ever-helpful and hospitable people of South Church, and to the splendid young people themselves, led by Donald Sexton of Wethersfield, President of the Northeast Pilgrim Fellowship.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Rev. Neil H. Swanson, Jr., Milwaukee, Wisconsin

On Church Extension

If we are to continue the Congregational Way, we must make adequate provision in our total program for "church extension." This means that new churches will need to be organized in strategic areas. It means that such new churches will need financial help to secure professional leadership and to develop facilities.

To this end, the National Association has a Commission on Missions and Church Extension. As a result of action taken at the meeting of the Commission in Detroit, it now has a revolving loan fund. It is possible for individuals and churches to make donations so that direct gifts may be made to worthy Congregational churches or so that funds will be available to them for loans.

For specific illustration of what has been happening, I would like to refer to the church in Anaheim, California. One year ago it consisted of a deed to some property and a symbolic orange from the grove on that property, which Harry Butman had brought with him to Hartford. Today it consists of a rapidly-growing church of one hundred members with an effective full-time minister.

A letter received in early October brings this story up to date.

"Dear Mr. Swanson:

Mrs. George D. Griffith deeded her home to a board of trustees consisting of the ministers of three sponsoring churches for the establishing of an Independent Autonomous Congregational Church in Anaheim, California. The National Association joined with these churches in providing the money needed to start this new church. The grant of the National Association was most generous.

The result has justified the expenditures of the sponsoring churches and the National Association. A fine group of people has been gathered by the Minister, Walter J. Vernon. New members are to be received next Sunday—October 5th—and Mr. Vernon expects that these new people will bring the membership up to at least one hundred members. (The church was organized June 29th). But it is something more than numbers that makes this new venture significant. It is the quality of these people and their devotion and enthusiasm. The National Association has done a significant thing in helping to make this new church possible.

At a meeting of the Trustees, held last evening, it was voted that I should write to the National Association expressing our deep appreciation of the help that it has given in this new venture. Will you please convey to the National Association our sincere gratitude for its fine cooperation?

Cordially yours,
Perry F. Schrock
Chairman of the Board of Trustees"

Thus, we are able to further the Congregational Way through extending a helping hand to Christian friends across the miles. And this, remember, is only one example!

News Notes

Since the last report given in THE CONGREGATIONALIST, four churches have voted to become members of the National Association. These are: *Michigan,* Grand Rapids, *Mayflower* (Rev. Bruce H. Masselink, Pastor); Wayne, (Rev. Erwin A. Britton, Pastor); *Minnesota,* Bayport, (Rev. Lorenzo G. Todd, Pastor); and *Pennsylvania,* Sharon, (Rev. William Randall, Pastor). To these churches we say, "We welcome you with joy into our communion and fellowship."

Pennsylvania Association Meets

The Pennsylvania Association of Congregational Christian Churches met on September 22 in the Birmingham Church, Pittsburgh, with Dr. John F. C. Green of McKeesport as Moderator. At the afternoon session addresses were given by Rev. Malcolm K. Burton and Rev. Irving E. Howard. At a separate meeting of the women, Mrs. Malcolm K. Burton presented the accomplishments of the Commission on Women's Work of the National Association, and a committee to organize a Women's Fellowship of continuing Congregational churches in Pennsylvania was elected with Mrs. Roy E. Goodyear of McKeesport as Chairman. It was announced that since the 1957 meeting, First Church, McKeesport, and Edwards Memorial Church of Edwardsville have united with this Pennsylvania group of loyal Congregational churches. Several informal after-dinner talks were given, with Rev. Arthur W. Tiffen of Tarentum serving as toastmaster.

Berkshire Group Organizes

Fourteen men from several Congregational churches in the northern part of Berkshire County, Massachusetts, met at the First Church in Adams on September 22nd. Plans were made for the continuation of the Congregational Way in the event of some churches withdrawing from the Congregational fellowship to become congregations of the so-called "United Church of Christ." Thus far no churches in that area have voted to make this change of denomination, but these men are planning for the day when it may be necessary to make a strong reaffirmation of the principles of free churches. A Declaration, Statement of Purposes, and Organization Plan were adopted, and a Board of Directors elected. This Committee will make plans for a fellowship wherein those concerned for continuing the integrity and growth of Congregational Churches may mutually consult, advise, and exchange information, and uphold the conviction that autonomous churches, freely associated, most effectively realize and expound the teachings of Jesus.

Pastoral Change

Rev. Donald G. Miller, who recently completed his course at Andover Newton Theological School, has been called to the Frankford Congregational Church, Philadelphia.

WOMEN'S WORK

Gratitude is the common denominator of all religious virtues, in whatever religion or tongue. The psalmist suggests "it is good to give thanks" and to "come before His presence with thanksgiving," not once a year, but again and again.

Annually, in November, Americans in commemoration of the Pilgrim spirit of gratitude, celebrate a day of Thanksgiving. The first Thanksgiving was patterned after the Dutch Thanksgiving celebrated on October 3, for their deliverance from the Spaniards. In a land of plenty, of super-abundance, where surpluses of previous harvests cost the United States Government a million dollars a day in storage; where, in a push-button era of labor-saving devices that have taken drudgery from work; and where living is easy — perhaps too easy, we forget too readily or dismiss too quickly, thoughts on the spirit of the Pilgrims. History has recorded their deeds, their failures, and their accomplishments, as it will record ours. Their spirit will survive only as we recapture it, each one for himself.

They had come to a new land and were determined to carve a new destiny for themselves, without a king, without a bishop, without a prayer book, not asking a government for subsistence, but relying on themselves, with God's guidance to create their "civill body politick."

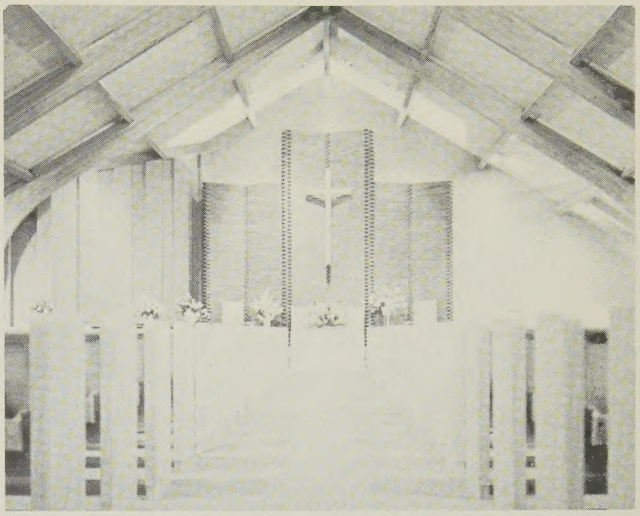
The Mayflower Compact uses neither the Anglo Saxon word "freedom" nor its Latin equivalent "Liberty" but it does contain the significant phrase "for ye glory of God and advancement of ye Christian faith." The Mayflower Compact was signed on "ye 11 of November, in ye year of ye raigne of our soveraigne lord, King James, of England, France and Ireland ye eighteenth, and of Scotland ye fiftie fourth, Ano. Dom. 1620."

Thankfulness and Opportunity

In that grim winter, their ranks were so thinned by sickness that only half of them survived. There were more graves on the hill than numbered in the living, and they dared not mark those graves lest they reveal to the Indians their true number. Four complete families were wiped out. Only three families were undivided by death. There were twenty men left that first harvest. Ten women — three wives, three widows, two young women, and two teenage girls — cooked the first Thanksgiving feast for their own band of fifty-one and ninety-one Indian guests, who stayed for three days!

We know their utensils and equipment were inadequate, but they made do with what they had and utilized the forests and the streams to supplement their store, and they were grateful to God for His bounty and His care of them.

And when their supplies dwindled and corn was rationed to each, not by the bushel, but by the kernel, they celebrated a day of fasting and prayer, seeking to find God's will for them in America so that they might worship without interference of any save their own conscience and establish a nation that would preserve that freedom for those who came after them. Opportunity to do for themselves was what they sought. It required far more from them than they required from it. They found no half-way resting places in opportunity — they had to keep going, each one working and contributing to the goal.



This beautiful modernistic interior is the place of worship of the First Congregational Church of Cheyenne, Wyoming, Rev. Leslie G. Deinstadt, Pastor. This member-church of the National Association was gathered in 1869. It now has 650 members and is providing adequate leadership in a growing city.

WOMEN'S WORK (CONT.)

Underprivileged?

Perhaps we think them underprivileged — no homes, no schools for their children, no transportation but their own legs and a small boat, no cultural and recreational facilities, no money and no place to spend money if they had it, no communication systems, and no social security. But they would have been more than intolerant if any one had labeled them underprivileged. When complaints were made by some sent over by the Merchant Adventurers that water was "not wholesome" and that the mosquitoes were terrible, Bradford replied that the spring water at Plymouth was "as good as any in the world"; and that people who were too "delicate to . . . endure the biting of a mosquito had better stay in England till at least they be made mosquito proof." Underprivileged? Not with their courage and determination, and their boundless faith in God! They had personally committed themselves to advance that faith. They had the courage and the will to do it.

Our opportunities in America today are no less than theirs in 1620. "Advancement of ye Christian Faith" is as great a challenge today as it was in the days of the Pilgrims. Shall we reap the benefit of their harvest without also planting and cultivating the seeds of our faith?

Opportunities for us to serve our churches are far greater today than for them in 1620. Let us be grateful, not just one day a year. Rather, let us make every day one of Thanksgiving for opportunities to serve. Let us make Thanksgiving an experience of deeds. Our ingenuity to create with our own talents and the possibilities of sharing with others are waiting only for expression.

"We, ourselves, must Pilgrims be;
Launch our Mayflower; and steer boldly
Through the desperate winter sea."

Remember, a ship in a harbor is safe, but ships were not built to lie at anchor.

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
1955–1958

Rev. Harry W. Johnson, Boise, Idaho

(Condensed from a Paper given at the Annual Meeting)

During its third year, now coming to a close, the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches has continued to grow in numerical strength, and, especially during this past year, it has developed considerably its program through departmental activities. Nineteen new churches have joined the National Association, representing a church membership of an additional 6,543 people. The total, as of this writing is 163 member-churches having an aggregate church membership of 64,596.

The financial support for our work has again improved substantially during the past year. However, we must confess that our reach has again exceeded our grasp. The income during the past year did *not fully* cover the budget as authorized at the Hartford meeting. The program of expanded activities proposed and authorized at Hartford has been directed carefully but hopefully by your officers within the limits which seemed to be indicated by the rate of financial income. Your treasurer will, of course, bring to you the detailed story of this phase of our work. The National Association has been more fortunate than most of you could possibly know in having the services of Mr. Paul Biggs as its efficient and devoted treasurer, and, may I add, I hope with his approval, the services also of a wonderful secretary in his office.

In the matter of the number of new member churches added during the year, our progress has not been all that some of us had hoped that it might be. Most of the Congregational Christian churches have come to the conclusion that no vital issues could be decided now or until the church members could see the constitution for themselves. This "wait-and-see" tendency is our biggest problem in getting any large number of churches to take positive action now.

What A Constitution Means

But the simple fact that there is to be, and that there must be, a constitution for the whole Church—The United Church of Christ — that fact itself defines the nature of the new denomination. It is going to be a corporate national "Church." To such a body the constitution is a necessity as a controlling document. Such a body, with its over-all constitution for the whole church, would come under the jurisdiction of those state laws that apply to presbyterial bodies. The states have generally recognized the right of such a corporate church to final and absolute control over all of its members, ministers, local congregations and over the property of those congregations or local churches. Such a corporate church is by definition and by recognized legal status, an ecclesiastical body with its final controls "at the top."

There is one possibility of help from a new source toward clarifying the real issues. An appeal has been made to the secular court by a small group of churches and individuals. They have asked for the protection of the court against those provisions in the Basis of Union which would infringe upon the rights of free churches and upon members of free churches not consenting to the proposed union. The relief sought by them, if granted by the court, will not only bring the same relief to others who are similarly situated, but it would also constitute a clarification of the issues which are now beclouded by contradictions and confusion.

Funeral Plans Are Premature

Congregationalism will not die. Plans for its funeral are quite premature. Congregational people still believe in the freedom of the local church. When they finally face the ugly fact that the freedom for their church must be sacrificed if they accept the Basis of Union, the choice will not be so difficult. The Basis of Union must be discarded. Church union must await a better plan. Our rightful place in American Protestantism is in that great company of American Christians, some 20 million strong, who belong to local churches that are free.

We are proud to be in the ranks of such Congregationalists. We prize highly the right of our churches to retain their standing in their local associations and conferences as Congregational Christian Churches. We recognize the right of no one, outside of the local church itself, to change or compromise that standing. We believe that the local church *is the church*. Our covenant is with God and with the other members of our respective churches to do His will. We as individuals and our respective churches must be free, always, to follow His will as it shall be revealed to us.

Our commitment to the free-church polity is, to us, an essential factor of our personal commitment as Christians. Any plan of church union, present or future, national or international, which cannot accommodate itself to the principle of complete local autonomy so precious to these vast millions of Christian people, will be a disservice to the cause of Christian unity. Those who have despaired of the Congregational way may ridicule it, they may leave it, they may seek to destroy it by subversion from within, but they will not succeed in its extermination.

Get That Study Packet!

The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches has prepared a "Study Packet" for churches and groups interested in careful consideration of the question of union with the Evangelical and Reformed Church. This packet includes a one-page mimeographed statement by Dr. Harry R. Butman, "The Biblical Basis for Congregationalism"; "A Protest Against Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Committee" (delivered at the 1958 General Council meeting in Boston) by Rev. Malcolm K. Burton; three folders, "The Story of the Merger," "Should Lay People Ask Questions?" and "Church Property and Church Unions," by Dr. Harry W. Johnson; together with questions suggested for discussion, a sample of the type of resolution many churches are passing to protect themselves from being drawn into the United Church without their own formal action, and a form for certification of churches which vote to become members of the National Association.

Any church or group of church members which desires to study the meaning and implications of the proposed merger will find this packet most useful. The packet itself or particular pieces from it may be obtained without charge from Rev. Neil H. Swanson, Jr., 176 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin, or Rev. Joseph J. Russell, 61 East Street, Melrose 76, Massachusetts.

Our Devotional Column

Rev. Robert Haldane, Jr.

Arbor Grove Church, Jackson, Michigan

"We persuade men, but what we are is known to God . . . it is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends."

II Cor. 5:11 & 10:18

Jesus often asked, "Wilt thou be made whole?" He came to the whole man, ministering to Body, Mind, and Spirit. To the body He was Healer, to the mind He was Teacher, to the spirit He was Redeemer. Nor would we fail to continue His full ministry. We have the commanding words; "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was naked and ye clothed me; whatsoever ye have done unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." So we establish medical missions and social services; we tend the body.

We have the command, "Go ye therefore unto all nations teaching them whatsoever I have commanded you," so we found and keep mission schools, colleges, and seminaries wherever there is need. We tend the mind.

Then in our Churches in our own communities, in jungles and mountains, we and all our brethren listen to such words as these: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." We take worship seriously. We tend the spirit.

But are we really tending all three dimensions of life, either as individuals or as Churches? What might those to whom we go say? Paul wrote, "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you?"

Like ancient Gaul, all mankind, collectively and individually, is divided in three parts. We have three dimensions to keep, body, mind, and spirit. And in each of these, even a child is known by his doings. Have we been temperate, protecting health, keeping physically fit? Have we been scholarly, keeping mentally awake? Have we been worshipful, keeping morally straight? And with respect to our whole humanity, have we been healing and providing hospitals and medicines? Have we been teachers, and provided schools? Have we been worshippers, and prayed for our fellows?

Let us as free, liberal Christians listen to the recommendation we might get from the world—and then let us build our programs in accordance with all three dimensions—and become living letters of recommendation for Free Churches, each bearing on the tablet of his heart the message written with the Spirit of the Living God.

Prayer: Help us, O God, to relate body, mind, and spirit in a living testimonial to that which we believe, and grant that our open lives may then receive Thy Spirit, effectively becoming Thy Word of commendation and Love to the world. Amen.

A CALL TO THANKSGIVING

Mary Ellen Chase

As we near the close of a year burdened and darkened by anxiety and dread not only for the freedom and safety of ourselves as a people, but of all the world, we may perhaps question the reasons for giving thanks to God after the example of our New England forefathers three centuries and more ago. Yet the courage and faith which upheld them as they crossed the seas to an unknown land in search of freedom is our most precious heritage and must never be forgotten or carelessly recalled. When they established the first Thanksgiving, they knew, as all thoughtful people must always know, that God can never be the source of evil and of suffering, but only of good; that injustice and greed spring from the minds of men who abuse their God-given freedom; and that freedom, rightly understood and used, constitutes and must always constitute the whole dignity of man. These were the invincible convictions which founded our country; and it is for these that we should, above all else, give thanks to God.

But only to give thanks in these days is not enough. Resolution and re-dedication are necessary as well. For the very sake of our freedom we should resolve never to free ourselves from the fear of indifference and complacency, carelessness and apathy, which can eventually destroy both an individual and a nation.

Our forefathers battled against the dangers of a forbidding land, against cold, hunger, sickness, and unremitting labor. We battle instead, if we are wise, against the blessings of warmth and plenty, comfort and prosperity; for these blessings, if we treasure them too highly, are capable of making us forgetful of those moral and spiritual possessions and values which alone endure.

If we are true to our heritage, we shall on this Thanksgiving Day determine to remind ourselves and to teach our children that our freedom demands of us constant concern for the welfare and the dignity of all men, women, and children wherever they may be; constant vigilance against prejudice, selfishness, injustice and oppression not only in our behaviour, but in our thoughts; constant willingness to sacrifice for the common good; and constant warfare against indifference toward such honest and eager resolution that we can truly give thanks to God "whose service is perfect freedom" and who calls upon each and everyone of us to fulfill His commands of peace and righteousness upon this earth.

(This "Call to Thanksgiving" was written by Miss Chase at the request of the Publications Commission of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. It has been recorded by the motion picture actor Charlton Heston. Records may be obtained at nominal cost from the National Association office, 176 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin. They are especially appropriate for use by radio stations at Thanksgiving time.)

The third Annual Meeting of the National Association, in Detroit October 21–23, 1958, was the best attended of any gathering of the organization since its formation in 1955. Great credit is due to Dr. George V. Bohman, who retired as Moderator, for his efforts in preparing the inspiring program. An account of the meeting will appear in the December CONGREGATIONALIST.

CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION INCORPORATES

Mrs. Stewart Tatem, Eastford, Conn.

At a meeting held at the South Congregational Church in Hartford on September 25, the Connecticut Fellowship of Congregational Christian Churches, organized a year before, considered the question of incorporating. The question had been examined exhaustively by a committee consisting of George E. Howard, Esq., William E. C. Bulkeley, Esq., and Rev. Henry David Gray, and their report was favorable. After full and free discussion, it was voted to incorporate as "The Connecticut Association of Congregational Churches, Inc.," with the provision that the word "Christian" be added after "Congregational" if the committee, after checking with the Secretary of State, deemed it advisable to do so. The members of the Executive Committee are to act as incorporators.

The purposes stated in the Articles of Association are:

1. "To continue the historic fellowship and promote the work and well-being of Connecticut Congregational Churches, that is, those Churches which follow the Congregational polity, the system of church organization which recognizes the equal rights of all believers, the complete independence and autonomy of the local church, and the association of the churches through voluntary organizations devised for fellowship and cooperation but without ecclesiastical authority; and
2. "To perform, as deemed necessary or desirable, all functions customarily performed by Associations or State Conferences of Congregational Churches."

It was voted that a special meeting of this Association be called at the discretion of the Executive Committee to act upon the Constitution and By-Laws.

For Protection of the Churches

As a result of the action of the Executive Committee at a previous meeting, rubber stamps were provided at cost for the use of churches which desire to protect themselves against being drawn into the United Church of Christ through cooperation with bodies which go into it, by sending missionary contributions and *per capita* dues, or by the election of delegates. This rubber stamp reads, "This is not to be considered as an act of cooperation with the 'United Church of Christ,'" and may well be used on checks, delegates' credentials, and registrations for the General Council.

This meeting was not only well attended but very enthusiastic. It is evident that a large number of Connecticut Congregationalists are determined not to repeat the mistake of 1708, when the Saybrook Platform came so near to destroying true Congregationalism in Connecticut, and caused so much trouble and friction.

Spencer Church Honored

The new modernistic building of the Congregational Church of Spencer, Iowa (Rev. C. Earl Page, Pastor) is one of the ten churches featured in an article in the October 4 SATURDAY EVENING POST, with full colored night and day photographs.

FROM THE LETTER BOX

I have just finished reading Henry David Gray's article on the historical importance of the Savoy Declaration of 1658. It seems to me that this thought is a necessary companion to any discussion of historical statements of faith. I would even include any such statement made in the very recent past. The thought that I have in mind is this: No past statement of faith should ever serve as a basis, in any way, for religious belief today. For instance, the Savoy Declaration was for the Seventeenth Century. In the realm of religious thought it is decidedly outmoded and completely inadequate for the mind of modern man. I would pass the same judgment upon the Kansas City Declaration of 1913. While this latter statement is not so bad as the Savoy Declaration, it is still not well-suited for today, for it still seeks to keep the Congregational denomination within traditional orthodox limits. And that is wrong and self-defeating. By seeking to unite with the Evangelical and Reformed Church, our leaders have told the people that they want this denomination to stay orthodox.

The time has now arrived for Congregationalists to stop accepting ideas on faith, and to begin testing severely all religious ideas for their validity before allowing them to be a part of one's faith.

Unless an idea is logical and realistic, it should be cast aside forever. Now is the time to clean house, to rearrange the theological furniture.

Polity is a matter that is worthy of our consideration. But there has been such a flood of active concern about church polity that all other considerations have been pushed into the background. This is not good at all. Where should Congregationalists stand religiously? Will we stand with the traditionalists, or will we join ranks with the modernists and the progressively minded? We must answer that question.

Rev. Arthur W. Greeley
New Castle, N. H.

Our Cover Picture

The bas-relief of the signing of the "Compact" in the cabin of the "Mayflower," November 11, 1620, is a part of the Pilgrim Memorial at Provincetown, Massachusetts. (Photo, John W. Gregory, Provincetown.)

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